

**IRGC Spokesman Ramezan Sharif Said That the Perpetrators of the Unsuccessful Attack on the Isfahan Facility Will Undoubtedly Receive an Appropriate Response**

# IRAN NEWS

**President Ebrahim Raisi Gov't Intends To Turn the Islamic Republic of Iran Into an Exporter of Space-Related Services in West Asia, Minister of Information and Communications Technology Issa Zarepour Said**

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**President Receives New Envoys of Four Countries**

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## 2 DOMESTIC

**Cultural Centers Will Be Established In Tehran, Moscow**

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## Iraq Commits to Paying Debt Owed to Iranian Companies

TEHRAN (PressTV)- A senior Iranian official say the Iraqi government has vowed it would soon settle debts owed to Iranian companies for various infrastructure projects executed in the Arab country in recent years.

Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari said on Monday that he had received guarantees about the settlement of the debts during a meeting earlier in the day in Baghdad with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani.

Safari quoted Sudani as saying that Iraq's 2023 budget will also provide for the funds needed for completion of a key railway as well as a highway linking Iranian border cities to the Iraqi railway and highway networks.

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## Army Unveils First Underground Air Force "Oqab 44" Base



### IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Iran Army unveiled its first underground air force base, called "Oqab 44" (Eagle 44), which is capable of accepting and operating various types of fighter jets and bombers as well as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) of the Air Force.

Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri and Major

General Abdolrahim Mousavi, the chief commander of the Iranian Army, visited the underground base on Tuesday.

The large underground base will also have the ability to receive and operationally use the new fighters of the Air Force.

This is the first underground air base of the Iranian Army which is being publicized. No more information has been made available about other underground bases of the Army.

The Iranian Armed Forces have constructed underground bases over the recent decades. The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has built the first ever underground base or city to protect its missile units.

Meanwhile Baqeri highlighted the country's self-reliance in manufacturing defense products, saying the homegrown Iranian military products have found many clients in the world.

General Baqeri made the remarks during a ceremony at Imam Khomeini's holy shrine, where military commanders and officials renewed their allegiance to the ideals of the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini.

"Today, the Islamic Republic's defense power and deterrence capability are so fertile that we produce more than 90 percent of our needed products, and that our defense equipment has found many requesters," he said.

The top general also hailed the armed forces' readiness to counter threats posed by the enemy.

"Our defense deterrence does not allow the emergence of threats. But if there is a one percent chance of threat, our armed forces ... stand fully vigilant with all their facilities," he said.

"In the hybrid war with the enemy, the armed forces will stand by the officials and people with all their strength and will not allow the enemy to succeed."

After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has developed an independent defense industry.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made substantial headway in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient in the arms sector.

Iranian officials have repeatedly warned that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities which are entirely meant for defense.

General Baqeri also referred to the rising power of the Resistance Front against Israel, saying the occupying regime only makes verbal threats.

"Today, the Zionist regime only makes verbal threats, but it knows that it does not have the power to carry them out as it is surrounded by the member countries of the Resistance Axis," he added.

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## Iran Says Not Working With Russia On Drone Production

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran has denied its participation in any project for the joint production of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) with Russia, rejecting Western media reports in this regard as "sheer lies."

Nour News, which is affiliated with Iran's Supreme National Security Council, made the remark in a Monday tweet.

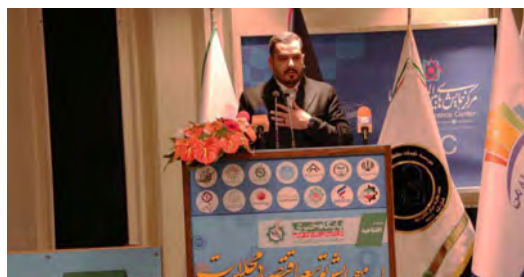
"Iran does not participate in any independent or joint project for production of drones in Russia," the agency said, adding, "Reports by Western media in this regard are sheer lies."

It added, "Western strategists had better find more believable excuses for the continuation of the war of attrition in Ukraine."

On Sunday, The Wall Street Journal cited unnamed "officials from a country aligned with the US" as saying that Moscow and Tehran have advanced plans to build an Iranian-designed factory in Russia to produce at least 6,000 combat drones.

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## Honoring Mr. Saeed Shabanian, Head of 2nd Step of Khatam Entrepreneurs Foundation, at the first Conference of "My Neighborhood Counter"



The first conference of "My Neighborhood Counter" with the theme of economic development of neighborhoods, focusing on providing neighborhood-oriented services to citizens, was held at the Conference Hall of IRIB where Eng. Saeed Shabanian was honored.

The first conference on the development of neighborhood economy was held in the presence of the presence of Dr. Agha Mohammadi, a member of the Expediency Council, Chairman of the Economic Committee of the Supreme National Security Council, Chairman of the Economic Committee of the Office of the Supreme Leader, Dr. Hossein Kashanipour, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Municipalities of the Provinces, Hojatoleslam Nochmani, Secretary General of the Supporters of the Velayat Front, Dr. Iman Masdari, the CEO of the Organization of Specialists and Managers of the country, engineer Saeed Shabanian, the head of 2nd

Chamber of Commerce and the Municipality. It is worth noting that in this conference, Brigadier General Kamali and Hojatoleslam Nochmani honored Engineer Shabanian as national entrepreneur and head of 2nd Step of Khatam Entrepreneurs Foundation. It should be noted that during the conference, it was stated that encouraging entrepreneurs is one of the most essential pillars of this conference; and also, at this sensitive economic stage, we should try to help young people to become entrepreneurs by taking practical measures and to be able to work as a group by joining hands with each other, and



the country, even though it scientifically, in some occasions enjoys good position and especially scientifically in terms of technology, should be upgraded. Therefore, such meetings make the youth and even the veterans and educated people help each other so that the elites in this country can take effective and constructive steps in the field of Iran's self-sufficiency and solving the problems of the youth and the country. The purpose of this conference is to unravel the knots, however small, of the problems and concerns of industrialists and entrepreneurs. One of the strengths and positive points of this consensus is that by eliminating meetings with no output, identifying weak points and raising them with government officials, a small part of production obstacles can be removed.



Step of Khatam Entrepreneurs Foundation, the CEO of the National Center of Franchisers Without Borders, and the directors of the National Post Company, the Ministry of Cooperation, the

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## Iran Potential Oil Output at 7.4mbd

TEHRAN (Shana) - The head of the economic group of the Supreme Leader's Office stated that Iran has the ability to reach the crude oil daily production capacity of 7.4 million barrels, saying: "We are an oil country, we cannot lag behind the countries that are planning to increase their production capacity."

Ali Aghamohammadi said on Saturday that if Iran is to develop, oil is the center of it.

He added: "Iran is an oil country and we can reach the daily production capacity of 7,400,000 barrels of crude oil, while the countries around us are planning to increase oil production and increase their production to 10 million barrels per day, we cannot lag behind them."

The head of the economic group of the Supreme Leader's Office continued: "Therefore, we must act as quickly as possible to develop the oil industry, we need more oil reserves to develop oil, and we must have maximum exploration in this field."

## Iran Shows Interest In Belarusian Timber

MINSK (Dispatches) - Iran is interested in timber supplies from Belarus, Belarusian Deputy Forestry Minister Vladimir Krech told the media after his visit to Tehran, BelTA learned from the press service of the Forestry Ministry.

The delegation headed by Vladimir Krech visited Iran and took part in the 20th International Exhibition Iran WOODDEX in Tehran. The Belarusian delegation got familiar with the exposition of woodworking equipment and wood products, and held a number of business negotiations with representatives of the business community and the banking sector.

"The main result of our trip is that we heard the interest of Iranian companies in both our timber products and wood chips. Today Iran produces fiberboard and chip board. Low-quality raw materials, which are abundant in Belarus, are suitable for this purpose. It is inexpensive, so it is important to work well on logistics and optimization of all costs," Vladimir Krech said.

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## Iran Refutes Allegation of Violating Iraq's Sovereignty

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's UN ambassador dismissed an accusation made by the representative of Iraq that the Islamic Republic has violated the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbor, reaffirming Iran's right to self-defense against the KRG-based armed and terrorist groups.

Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations Saeed Iravani on Monday sent a letter to President of the Security Council Vanessa Frazier and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to respond to the Iraqi envoy's claim that Iran has violated Iraq's territorial integrity.

## President Receives New Envoys of Four Countries

*IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK*

**TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi on Tuesday received new Ambassadors of Zimbabwe, Greece, Uruguay and France where the ambassadors submitted their credentials.**

In meeting with Greek envoy Stylianos Gavrill, President emphasized the role of the ancient and deep-rooted civilizations of Iran and Greece in the emergence and evolution of civilization and expressed hope that the close and friendly relations between Iran and Greece will be a suitable platform for developing cooperation in various economic, political and cultural fields.

Raisi also emphasized the role of the ancient and deep-rooted civilizations of the two countries in the emergence and evolution of civilization, and expressed hope that the close and friendly relations between Iran and Greece is a suitable platform for developing cooperation in various economic, political and cultural fields.

Pointing out that the cruel sanctions could not stop the Islamic Republic of Iran from growth and development, the President added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the development of relations with Greece and we believe that this goal can be achieved".

In this ceremony, the new ambassador of Greece to Tehran Stylianos Gavrill also stated that the Greek view Iranians as a great and proud nation in the world, and today the Islamic Republic is an important and influential country not only in the region, but also in the world, adding, "Iran and Greece have historical commonalities and cooperation with each other, and based on the principle of mutual respect in its foreign policy, Greece seeks to deepen relations with Iran in areas of mutual interest".

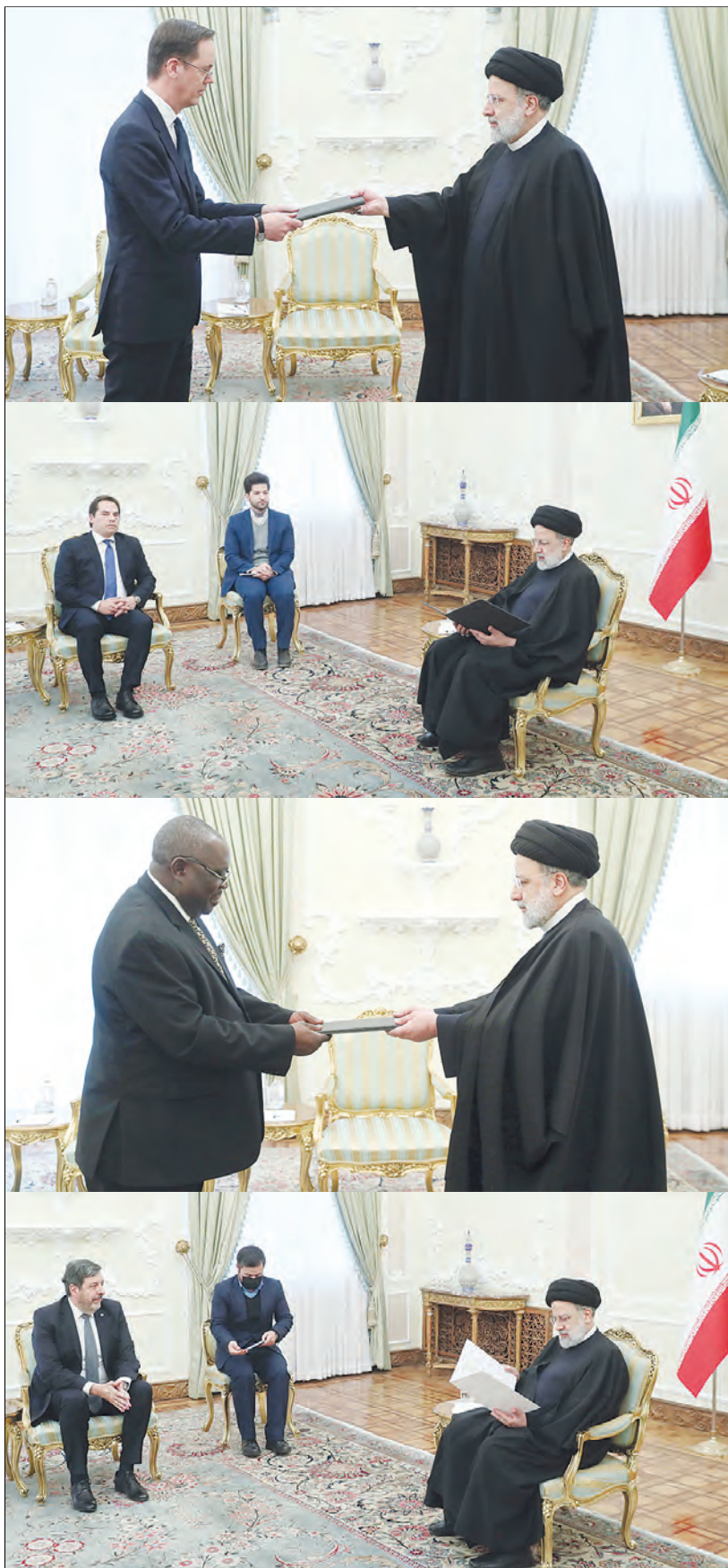
Meanwhile referring to the friendly relations between Iran and Zimbabwe after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the President said, "Iran and Zimbabwe have many capacities that can be used to promote and expand bilateral relations and cooperation".

Speaking at the ceremony of receiving the letter of credence of Zimbabwean Ambassador Bright Kupemba, the new ambassador of Zimbabwe to Tehran, Raisi pointed out that the relations between the two countries have been friendly and expanding after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, and said, "Iran and Zimbabwe have great capacities that can be used in the promotion and development of relations and cooperation between the two countries".

Referring to the exchange of numerous diplomatic delegations between the two countries and the signing of various cooperation documents in the economic and commercial fields, the President added, "Following up on the implementation of these documents can be one of the work priorities of the new Zimbabwean ambassador in Tehran".

Bright Kupemba, the new ambassador of Zimbabwe, expressed his sympathy over the earthquake in Khoy, and described the progress of the Islamic Republic of Iran to be very significant despite the imposition of extensive sanctions, and said that during his mission in Tehran, he would try, in addition to taking advantage of these developments, to provide new opportunities and fields for cooperation between the two countries.

Then in other meetings, new French and Uruguayan envoys submitted their credentials to President Raisi.



## Employment Rate In Iran Increases

TEHRAN (IP) - Referring to the continuation of the economic investment in the first half of this year and the economic growth rate, Finance Minister said the employment statistics confirm the growth rates of the first half of the current [Persian] year.

"In this fall, there has been an increase in net employment of more than 535,000 people compared to last year. The total number of employed people has reached 24,700,000 people, which coincides with a 0.1% increase in the participation rate," Ehsan Khandouzi added.

He said that the unemployment rate has decreased to 8.2 percent, while delivering a speech in his weekly press conference.

"This year, the number of employed people in the country is 750,000 more than what was in 2016, that is, before the sanctions," Khandouzi explained.

He went on to say that the employment rate of the industrial sector increased by 2% and reached more than 8,329,000 people, which is 666,000 more than the industrial employment of 2016.

## ICC Delegation Visits PRODEXPO in Moscow

*IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK*

TEHRAN – A specialized trade delegation of agrofood from Iran Chamber of Cooperative (ICC) visited the 30th PRODEXPO (food stuff and drinks) in Moscow.

According to the public relations of ICC, the dispatched delegation of the ICC in special groups of dried fruits, protein-rich products and food industries visited the exhibition on Tuesday.

The exhibition is underway with presence of more than 35 countries in 60 different fields of agriculture where they put on display their latest achievements and products.

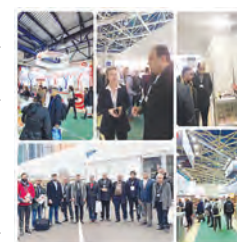
In other section of the exhibition the participants put on display exporting products.

PRODEXPO Moscow is one of the most important exhibition events in the field of agriculture in the world and it is important event for introducing products of Russia and the EAEU states.

More than 70,000 people visit the exhibition every day and it is an opportunity for economic activists to broaden their activities.

The ICC delegation is in Moscow and visited the exhibition to study the condition for future cooperation and using the Iran trade center in Moscow as well as getting acquainted with the taste of Russians for future cooperation.

PRODEXPO 2023 kicked off on February 6 and will run till February 10 in Moscow.



## Cultural Centers Will Be Established in Tehran, Moscow

*IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK*

TEHRAN - According to the agreement signed between the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Iran and the Deputy Minister of Digital Development of Russia, a cultural center in Tehran and a cultural center in Moscow will be opened soon simultaneously.

In the meeting held between Mohammad Mahdi Esmaili, Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and Bella Cherkasova, Deputy Minister of Digital Development of Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation, the above agreement was signed by both parties.

In this meeting, Esmaili pointed out that today Iran and Russia are targets of media attacks by rival countries, and he said: The presidents of the two countries always emphasized the development of cultural and media relations in their recent meetings.

He added: one cultural center in Tehran and a center in Moscow will be established soon to follow the activities more seriously than before.

He added: This memorandum is being finalized in the Iranian parliament and will be officially announced as soon as the procedures are completed.

Referring to the prospect of clear media communication between the two countries, Iran's minister requested that the activities of the joint cultural working group of Iran and Russia be followed more seriously.



## Iran, Russia Have Deep-Rooted, Developing Ties in Various Fields

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran and Russia have deep-rooted and expanding relations in various economic, defense, military, security and scientific fields, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani says.

Shamkhani made the remarks upon his arrival in Moscow where he is scheduled to participate in the fifth round of the regional security dialogue in the Russian capital of Moscow on Wednesday.

He noted that it was necessary to review the roadmap drawn up by the two countries' top officials for strengthening bilateral cooperation over the next two decades.

Back in January, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said the Iranian and Russian presidents have tasked the top diplomats of the two countries with working out the 20-year roadmap for cooperation.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Shamkhani said the participants at the regional security dialogue meeting would discuss the latest political, economic and security developments in Afghanistan.

Iran's top security official noted that the problems of the Afghan people are rooted in the ineffectiveness of the occupying forces and the post-occupation incidents.

The ways to settle issues in the war-stricken country would be discussed in the Moscow meeting, given the fact that "Afghanistan can become a crisis point in the region," he said.

Looking at all regional countries hit by foreign intervention, he went on, one can see that the problems in those countries are caused by two central issues, namely "creating discord within them and preventing the resolution of regional crises by the countries of the region themselves."

He further emphasized that extra-regional powers are the ones sowing discord in regional countries and interfering in their internal affairs in an attempt to limit their power to solve regional crises.

The US invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, despite the fact that no Afghan national was involved in the attacks. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans died in the US war of aggression on the country.

American forces had occupied the country for about two decades on the pretext of fighting against the Taliban. But as the US forces left Afghanistan in August last year, the Taliban stormed into the capital Kabul, which was weakened by continued foreign occupation.

The Taliban took over the capital Kabul on August 8, 2021, and declared that the war in Afghanistan was over. The militants entered the presidential palace after President Ashraf Ghani fled the country.



Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Stipulated During the Unveiling of the Anti-Rust Sheet by Mobarakeh Steel Co



International Authority With the Production of Special Steels

In the presence of the Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade, the Governor of Isfahan, a group of Isfahan Province representatives in the Islamic ,13 Council, provincial and regional officials, and on Thursday, Bahman during the holy Ten-Day-Dawn festivities marking the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, a stainless steel sheet that was expertly crafted was unveiled. Mobarakeh Steel Company officially joined the few producers of this priceless steel product in the world after it was unveiled to Sabai Steel employees and produced for the first time in Southwest Asia and North .Africa

During his visit to Mobarakeh Fould, Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Seyyed Reza Fatemi Amin said: "Since the beginning of the year, the production of special steels with high added value is in order." He also visited the company's production lines and unveiled stainless steel sheets. All of the nation's steelmakers have completed their tasks, and fortunately, Mobarakeh Steel's employees have acquired the technology necessary to produce stainless steel, allowing them to produce and supply this valuable product for the first time in Southwest Asia and North Africa. I sincerely congratulate Iran's noble people on this worthwhile accomplishment years, and fortunately, it has made significant progress in every field 40 In fact, Iran began a new path in the last According to Minister pf Industry, whenever foreign leaders and officials visit Iran and learn about the country's accomplishments, they almost universally express surprise that Iran has been able to make such strides in the face of sanctions

People need to be fully informed of the accomplishments made at Mobarake Steel

He emphasized the significance of educating people about recent accomplishments, saying: "People should be ".fully aware of such achievements that have been made in Mobarakeh Steel million 30 Iran's steel industry has developed and progressed significantly, in such a way that at this time, about" tons of steel are produced in the country, and we are currently among the top ten countries in the world with such a capacity," Fatemi Amin said as he continued his speech. Despite the recent decline in global steel production, and had the highest growth rate of steel production among 2022 we were still able to rank seventh in November increase to be %8 with an 2022 the world's leading steelmakers in

He said, in reference to the nation's production and industrial strategies: The country's steel industry must now finish the steel chain, which is having issues with exploration, transportation, and some other infrastructures. In the second part of this strategy, we should focus especially on producing goods with greater added value and move away from mass-producing goods that are available for production in all nations

Improving Both Livelihood and Lives of the People and International Authority Is Main Objectives of the Ministry

According to the Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade, this ministry has taken into consideration two key objectives for the national economy. Improving people's quality of life is the first and most crucial goal, and achieving international authority is the second. As previously stated, in order to accomplish this goal, we must produce goods that fewer nations can produce, and this tactic will benefit the nation. grants power Keep in mind ".that countries with a greater variety of products tend to score higher on the "complexity index

The nation's industry has authority because of the production of specialty goods, and this incident occurred today in Mobarakeh Steel Company

Few countries have the capacity to produce a variety of goods, but those that do tend to produce more complex goods due to their limited production capacity. As a result, we are forced to manufacture goods that many other nations cannot. In this scenario, we won't have any issues importing everyday goods and can instead export our unique products with higher added values. This incident occurred today at Mobarakeh Steel, which is precisely what supports the nation's industry

In keeping with the previous sentence, he continued, "I celebrate this success and congratulate the board of directors, CEO, and staff of this company, as well as the entire nation of Iran and all those who worked hard in this direction." Unquestionably, the production of this item is more expensive by three to four times than that of other ordinary sheets and generates greater revenue, profit, and added value for Mobarakeh Steel and the nation Fatemi Amin expressed his hope that the accelerated path toward production, development, and employment, as well as the overall development of the nation, will continue this year and pick up speed in the coming months He concluded by saying: "These accomplishments are unquestionably the work of each and every factory ".employee, and we will try to support them in this proud path

We Should Be Grateful to Mobarakeh Steel Group

Seyyed Reza Mortazavi, the governor of Isfahan, continued the ceremony by referring to the workers and managers of Mobarakeh Steel as the nation's production and economic officers. He also expressed his appreciation for the Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade's attendance at the event by saying: "Currently, there is activity in the industrial sector and production efforts. Making products using cutting-edge technology is essential for our nation, and given the numerous changes that have taken place in a variety of economic and industrial sectors, we must also work to increase our comprehensiveness in a variety of fields in order to attract the necessary people to our nation and to establish nations that require our presence in the region

The governor of Isfahan continued, "We see the weight of many efforts today in the nation." Every day, the nation's scientists and technologists make advances in one or more fields of technology. Due to its scientific and technological prowess as well as its history in the industrial sector, Isfahan has specifically been known as the birthplace of industry, art, and culture since the Safavid era

He emphasized the scientific and technological prowess of Isfahan Province, saying: "Today, we have reached a point where an industry entering Isfahan Province can quickly improve its local circumstances and professional status to the extent that it can grow this industry from zero to One of the areas he finds a hundred of is the steel sector

million tons. But right now, 3.5 million tons, then 2.4 Mortazavi continued: Mobarakeh Steel initially produced million tons of steel, which is a joyous 10 we can see that the Mobarake Steel Group has produced more than development for which we should all express our congratulations. Keep in mind that the enemy can be prevented from achieving his objectives by letting the public know about such accomplishments, the adversary who uses a barrage of unfavorable advertisements to try and erase various aspects of success from our people's minds and hearts

When we examine the nation's institutionalized technology and various technological fields, we can see that our nation has fairly prospered since the revolution

In the past, doctors from other nations used to come to Iran to treat our countrymen, but now we see that many" people from all over the world choose Iran as their primary destination for medical care," he continued All those involved in the production of stainless steel sheets were congratulated by the governor of Isfahan, who also said: "We should be grateful to the group of agents present in Mobarakeh Steel Company, from the ".management to each and every employee of this group

Such accomplishments would not have been possible if each and every employee of Mobarakeh Steel Company

He stressed that none of these Mobarakeh Steel Company employees would have succeeded even if they had committed the slightest error in their work. Therefore, we should recognize these efforts, maintain this hope in the minds of those who work hard in the industry, and support and motivate them to reach new heights Mortazavi expressed his hope that when he visits Mobarakeh Steel in Isfahan in the not too distant future with the Honorable Minister of Industry, this company will have the technical know-how, capacity, and ability to produce many other grades of steel products, making Mobarakeh Steel an industry leader. They have to develop their technology

Mobarakeh Steel Company determined to turn Isfahan into the hub of innovation and technological of the country

The CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company, Mohammad Yaser Tayyebnia, expressed gratitude for the Minister of Peace's attendance at the meeting and added: in the year that the Revolution's Supreme Leader called it "The Mobarakeh Steel Company set the goal of producing unique sheets and products in accordance with global technologies, and with this approach, we became more determined in the field. Production; knowledge base; They were called job creators, and they brought a lot of happiness to me and other Mobarakeh Steel Company employees. Let's take action to create specialty steels with added value



He referred to the Supreme Leader of the Revolution's recent visit to the exhibition of domestic production capabilities and noted: the plans His Holiness promised during this visit and his emphasis on boosting the nation's economic and industrial power to organizations like Mobarakeh Steel, which were correctly noted. They are advancing in accordance with the system's objectives and leadership tactics.The CEO of the companysaid: This company as a driving force has matured to the point where it should serve as an economic development model, particularly for the nation's steel industry as well as for all the other economic sectors that the supreme leader of the revolution mentioned, from A number of positive developments have been made, such as boosting investments, enhancing productivity, developing a strategic vision, enhancing the business environment, and lowering the cost of production and service goods.As he continued, Tayebnia %20 gave a report on the most recent accomplishments of Mobarakeh Steel, noting that the company has a market share as the largest producer of steel sheets in the Middle East and North Africa and contributes .of total %8 of both the GDP and GDP. The domestic industrial sector accounts for %1.5 factories, workshops, and suppliers 3,500 He noted that Mobarakeh Steel has an extensive network of in its upstream and downstream, and he added that this company is doing well despite the energy restrictions, particularly in the winter due to gas restrictions. He was able to meet the majority of the yearly production targets in the first half of this year



142m tons of goods have been sold in the market since it first opened

The CEO of Mobarakeh Steel said: It is anticipated that at the end of the year, the production in thousand tons while expressing his satisfaction 200 million and 10 Mobarakeh Steel Group will exceed months 10 with the company's performance over the past million tons of its steel products since it first began 142 Tayyebnia reports that Mobarakeh Steel has sold to operate, and that over the past ten months, when compared to the same time last year, performance %12.8 has increased by According to him, the presence of firms like Mobarakeh Steel Company, which were able to expand and contribute significantly to the country's economic development, particularly in the steel %20 by 7th in November of last 10th to industry sector, is what allowed Iran to move up the global rankings from year

Due to its effective operation, Mobarakeh Steel prevented any inflammatory products from entering the market

The remarkable thing is that this company was able to stop any inflammation from entering the market and fully supply the domestic market with the good performance of its employees, Tayyabnia said, highlighting the significance of Mobarakeh Steel Company's performance He clarified: Although Mobarakeh Steel has not fulfilled its plan in the export sector due to the priority of the domestic market and some other factors, such as energy restrictions, the company still intends to accomplish its more products %18 objectives in the export sector by the end of the year. Mobarakeh Steel has been able to supply to the market up until the beginning of February compared to the same period of the previous year

Mobarake Steel is committed to maintaining its position as the nation's industry model for entrepreneurship

According to Tayyabnia, Mobarakeh Steel sees it as a mission to maintain its status as the nation's years old, Mobarakeh Steel 30 industry model for entrepreneurship. Another point is that after turning intends to move forward with bigger steps. This company targeted industrial self-sufficiency in the first stage, and in the second stage, it outlined the country's increasing economic growth. It now plans to play a major role in advancing the non-oil economy in the nation

million tons of steel 18 Outlook, Mobarakeh Steel Group produced 2025 By the He continued by saying that by implementing under-the-roof developments, such as million tons in 18 increasing productivity, participation, and other measures, the production of the Mobarakeh steel group is targeted in the mentioned horizon. He emphasized that we have 1410 billion dollars in revenue for Mobarakeh steel in the horizon of 15 set a target of

In terms of labor productivity per production ton, we want to get better result

The CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Company continued his speech by stating that the company's most important objective is to produce products with a higher added value. Mobarakeh Steel has previously thought little about development; going forward, it will be based on production. Put more of an emphasis on premium steels. The primary objective of Mobarake Steel is to produce special steels that add value to the national economy.

We also strive to improve our manpower productivity per ton of productio

The energy consumption pattern of Mobarakeh Steel, particularly water consumption, is currently among the best in the world

Another honor of Mobarakeh Steel Company, he said, is that it has made significant improvements in terms of energy and water usage. The energy consumption pattern of Mobarakeh Steel, particularly water consumption, is currently among the best in the world. Despite having more capacity for production, Mobarakeh Steel has reduced water consumption in its departments through significant investments and efficient use of water resources, and it intends to completely stop removing billion 2.3 raw water within the next three years. This company is funding environmental and energy-saving projects with dollars.Tayyebnia lists the other beneficial actions of Mobarakeh Steel as the construction of a power plant, the management of water and waste, and other initiatives. Up until recently, this company was promoted by respected national environmental officials as a suitable environmental model for other economic and production enterprisesof its capacity, but that some industries in the nation are unable to do so for various reasons. The main issue is that these industries' capacity may drop to in the upcoming years He emphasized that Mobarake Steel Group's mission is to create goods with a high %20 or even %1 level of unique added value and to pave the way for other steelmakers who are just starting out in the industry to produce additional new product types this %20 standard steels. In this regard, Mobarakeh Steel has been able to create and sell about year, including electrical sheets, corten, sheet metal, stainless steel, and a few special grades

Without the assistance of foreign experts, slab and stainless steel sheets can be produced

mm and a 1000 The value of this work, according to Tayyebnia, is that stainless steel sheets and plates with a width of mm are now institutionalized. This is due to the efforts of Mobarakeh Fould and Saba Fould %20 and %2, thickness of Complex. Without the aid of any outside experts, we set it in the knowledge base year

He noted that there aren't many manufacturers of stainless steel sheets in the world, and it took our Mobarakeh Steel colleagues about a year of research, study, and investigation for them to succeed tons of stainless steel sheets and added: We hope that Mobarakeh 8000 Tayyebnia stated that the nation consumed Steel will reduce in the upcoming years if other businesses in the nation can produce standard sheets and the pressure of kilograms of stainless steel, and %20 to %10 requesting ordinary sheets decreases. In developed countries, each person consumes kilograms per person. %1 in developing countries, this amount is one kilogram per person per year and the global average is thousand tons annually %20 can supply and produce this product at a rate of up to of the equipment needed by Foulad Mobarakeh has been locally produced %10 ,Over the past few years He clarified that the aforementioned items are just a portion of Mobarakeh Steel's accomplishments and that this company pieces of equipment and 10000 has made valuable advancements in the field of localization to the extent that more than raw materials required by Mobarakeh Steel have been localized to date with its assistance from manufacturers and domestic of the equipment needed by the %90 ,knowledge-based companies. It is reasonable to say that over the past few years company has been localized

Isfahan will become the nation's innovation and technological hub, according to Mobarake Steel

The CEO of the <obarakeh Steel Group Group continued: «Among other significant accomplishments of this company, the actions of this company in the field of new businesses are targeted with the cooperation of knowledge-based companies and by defining the ecosystem of technology and innovation.» In this regard, the company is committed to developing Isfahan to become the nation's innovation and technology hub. Of course, new jobs in this industry by the following %2,000 it has done well in this regard, and the company has plans to add year



## Vietnam Seizes 600 kg of Ivory Smuggled From Africa

HANOI (Dispatches) - Vietnamese authorities have over the past week seized more than 600 kilograms of ivory smuggled from Africa, the government said.

Trade in ivory is illegal in Vietnam but wildlife trafficking remains widespread. Other items often found smuggled into the country include pangolin scales, rhino horns and tiger carcasses.

Customs authorities in the northern port city of Haiphong on Monday found nearly 130 kilograms of ivory hidden in a container of cow horns originated from Africa, the government said in a statement. This followed the finding of nearly 500 kilograms of African ivory on Thursday last week at Lach Huyen Port in the city, the government said.

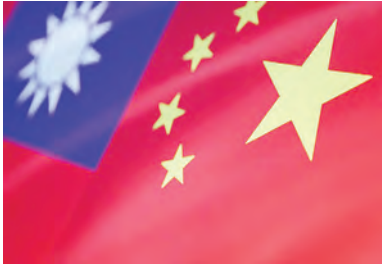


## Senior Taiwan Opposition Leader to Visit China

TAIPEI (Dispatches) - A senior leader of the Kuomintang (KMT), Taiwan's main opposition party, will visit China this week and meet its top Taiwan policy-maker, the party said on Monday, amid continued military and political tensions between the two sides.

China has during the past three years ramped up pressure on Taiwan to accept Chinese sovereignty, including staging regular military drills near the democratically governed island. Taiwan's government rejects China's territorial claims.

The KMT said its deputy chairman, Andrew Hsia, would leave for China on Wednesday and meet Song Tao, the newly appointed head of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, in a rare high-level interaction between top politicians from Taiwan and China.



## Huge Earthquake Kills 2,700 In Turkey and Syria



KAHRAMANMARAS (Dispatches) - A huge earthquake killed more than 2,700 people across a swathe of Turkey and northwest Syria on Monday, with freezing winter weather adding to the plight of the thousands left injured or homeless and hampering efforts to find survivors.

The magnitude 7.8 quake brought down whole apartment blocks in Turkish cities and piled more devastation on millions of Syrians displaced by years of war.

It struck before sunrise in harsh weather and was followed in the early afternoon by another large quake.

"It was like the apocalypse," said Abdul Salam al-Mahmoud, a Syrian in the northern town of Atareb. "It's bitterly cold and there's heavy rain, and people need saving."

The second quake was big enough to bring down more buildings and, like the first, was felt across the region, endangering rescuers struggling to pull casualties from the rubble.

In Diyarbakir in southeast Turkey, a woman speaking next to the wreckage of the seven-storey block where she lived said: "We were shaken like a cradle. There were nine of us at home. Two sons of mine are still in the rubble, I'm waiting for them."

She was nursing a broken arm and had injuries to her face.

The earthquake was the biggest recorded worldwide by the U.S. Geological survey since a tremor in the remote South Atlantic in August 2021.

Magnitude 7.9 earthquake hit southern Turkey on Feb. 6

In Turkey, the death toll stood at 1,651, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said, and 11,119 people were recorded as injured. At least 1,073 people were killed in Syria, according to figures from the Damascus government and rescue workers in the northwestern region controlled by insurgents.

Poor internet connections and damaged roads between some of the worst-hit cities in Turkey's south, homes to millions of people, hindered efforts to assess and address the impact.

Temperatures in some areas were expected to fall to near freezing overnight, worsening conditions for people trapped under rubble or left homeless. Rain fell on Monday after snowstorms swept the country at the weekend.

Monday's casualties already mark the highest death toll from an earthquake in Turkey since 1999, when a tremor of similar magnitude devastated the heavily populated eastern Marmara Sea region near Istanbul, killing more than 17,000.

President Tayyip Erdogan, who is preparing for a tough election in May, called it a historic disaster and the worst earthquake to hit the country since 1939, but said authorities were doing all they could.

"Everyone is putting their heart and soul into efforts although the winter season, cold weather and the earthquake happening during the night makes things more difficult," he said.

In Syria, already wrecked by more than 11 years of civil war, the health ministry said 593 people had been killed and more than 1,326 injured. In the Syrian rebel-held northwest emergency workers said 480 people had died.

The United Nations says 4.1 million people, many of them displaced by the conflict and living in camps, depend already on cross-border humanitarian aid in northwest Syria and international support efforts are stretched and underfunded.

"Syrian communities are simultaneously hit with an ongoing cholera outbreak and harsh winter events including heavy rain and snow over the weekend," U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters in New York.

## UN Chief Fears World Headed for Wider War Over Ukraine-Russia

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - UN chief Antonio Guterres warned nations that he fears the likelihood of further escalation in the Russia-Ukraine conflict means the world is heading towards a "wider war."

The secretary-general laid out his priorities for the year in a gloomy speech to the United Nations General Assembly that focused on Russia's invasion, the climate crisis and extreme poverty.

"We have started 2023 staring down the barrel of a confluence of challenges unlike any in our lifetimes," he told diplomats in New York.

Guterres noted that top scientists and security experts had moved the "Doomsday Clock" to just 90 seconds to midnight last month, the closest it has ever been to signaling the annihilation of humanity.

The secretary-general said he was taking it as a warning sign.

"We need to wake up -- and get to work," he implored, as he listed his urgent issues.



### Kosovo Says "Yes" to EU's Peace Deal With Serbia, With Caveats

PRISTINA (Dispatches) - Kosovo's prime minister Albin Kurti said he accepted a proposed European Union plan aimed at normalising relations with Serbia despite concerns over Western demands to give more rights to local Serbs that have so far hindered a peace deal.

Last month Western envoys told Kosovo and Serbia they should state whether they accept an 11-point plan meant to defuse tensions lingering since the 1998-99 war or face repercussions from the EU and United States.

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, a decade after a guerrilla uprising against Belgrade's rule. Over the past decade the two have been holding normalisation talks under EU mediation, with their success key for Pristina's and Belgrade's aspirations to join the wealthy bloc.

The 11-point plan calls for implementation of past deals, including the creation of an association of semi-autonomous Serb-majority municipalities that Kurti has opposed, saying it would effectively partition the country along ethnic lines, a criticism rejected by Western mediators.

"We do accept the EU proposal for normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and consider it a good basis for further discussion and a solid platform for moving forward," Kurti tweeted after meeting EU's envoy Miroslav Lajcak in Pristina.

"Certain questions on international guarantees, implementation mechanisms and time sequencing will be addressed soon during the Brussels talks ahead."

Last week, Kurti said he might be willing to take into consideration the formation of the association, but only if it complied with Kosovo's constitution and was not based solely on ethnic grounds.

Kosovo in 2013 pledged to give more autonomy to local Serbs, who refuse to recognise its 2008 independence, through such an association as

part of a peace deal. However, Kosovo's highest court said some parts of the deal violated the constitution and should be changed before it takes effect.

## Ukraine's Defense Ministry in Turmoil as Russia Readies Offensive

KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine sowed confusion about whether its defense minister would be replaced, creating doubts about the leadership of its war effort just as it braces for an expected Russian offensive.

The questions over Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov were the first public sign of serious disarray in Ukraine's wartime leadership.

A day after announcing that Reznikov would be sidelined, a top ally of President Volodymyr Zelenskiy appeared to row back, saying no changes would be made this week.

David Arakhamia, chief of the parliamentary bloc of Zelenskiy's party, had said the 37-year-old head of military intelligence, Kyrylo Budanov, would replace Reznikov, who would become minister of strategic industries.

But Zelenskiy remained silent, while Reznikov said on Sunday he had heard nothing.

The confusion caps a two-week crackdown on alleged official wrongdoing, Ukraine's biggest political and administrative shakeup since Russia invaded a year ago.

Central and regional officials were fired or quit, security forces raided a billionaire's home and investigations were launched into suspected fraud at the main oil company and refinery. The Defense Ministry was accused of overpaying for food, although Reznikov was not personally accused of any wrongdoing.

Zelenskiy says he needs to show that Kyiv can be a safe steward of billions of dollars of Western aid. But the moves may risk destabilising a political class that had stood together against Russia's invasion.

Meanwhile, Russian forces have been advancing for the first time in six months in relentless battles in the east. A regional governor said Moscow was pouring in reinforcements for a new offensive that could begin next week.

Ukraine is itself planning a spring offensive, but awaiting delivery of promised longer-range Western missiles and battle tanks.

Some of the West's support has also come in the form of economic sanctions, and there was a sign that these were hitting Russia's foreign revenues just as it raises spending on the war.

The Finance Ministry said vital oil and gas revenues were down 46% from January 2022 because of the discount that Russian crude now trades at on world markets.

While budget revenues for the month were down 35.1%, spending was up 59%, and already more than 10% of the full-year spending plan.

Reznikov, a 56-year-old lawyer, has been the face of Ukraine at international meetings where allies have pledged billions of dollars in arms, and has been warmly received in Western capitals - including Paris just last week.



## China Urges Restraint as U.S. Military Searches For Balloon Remnants

BEIJING (Dispatches) - Beijing urged Washington to show restraint as the

U.S. military searched for remnants of what it believes was a Chinese surveillance balloon it shot down over the Atlantic but which China says was a civilian craft that accidentally drifted astray.

The balloon drama has further strained tense relations, prompting Washington to cancel a planned visit over the weekend to Beijing by Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

A U.S. fighter jet shot down the balloon off South Carolina on Saturday after the military had tracked its path across the continental United States, a response China described as an "obvious overreaction".

China has repeatedly said the balloon was intended for scientific purposes and had blown off course.

"China firmly opposes and strongly protests against this," Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng said in remarks to the U.S. embassy in Beijing posted on the ministry's website.

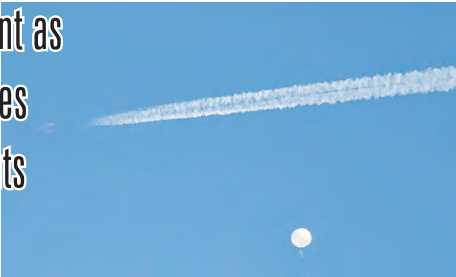
The U.S. Navy was working to recover the balloon and its payload and the Coast Guard was providing security for the operation, General Glen VanHerck, commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, said on Sunday.

A successful recovery could potentially give the United States insight into China's spying capabilities, though U.S. officials have downplayed the balloon's impact on national security.

On Monday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said China had found out its balloon had drifted over the United States after being notified by it.

"The unintended entry of this airship (into the U.S.) is entirely an isolated, accidental incident. It tests the sincerity the U.S. has in improving and stabilising bilateral relations and the way it handles crisis," she said.

"We hope the U.S. will work with China to properly handle our differences, avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding and harming our mutual trust," she said.





## From Vaccines to AI: New Weapons in the Fight Against Cancer

PARIS (Dispatches) - Could humanity finally be gaining the upper hand in our age-old fight against cancer?

Recent scientific and medical advances have added several new weapons to our arsenal, including personalized gene therapy, artificial intelligence screening, simple blood tests — and potentially soon vaccines.

Cancer accounted for nearly 10 million deaths — almost one in six of the global total — in 2020, according to the World Health Organization.

Ahead of World Cancer Day on Saturday, here are some of the promising recent developments in diagnosing and treating the disease.

Immunotherapy drugs, which stimulate the immune system to track down and kill cancerous cells, have been one of the biggest advances in cancer treatment over the last decade.

With fewer severe side effects than chemotherapy, immunotherapy has had a profound effect on the treatment of several types of cancer.

Before 2010, the survival rate for people with severe cases of the skin cancer melanoma was very low. But thanks to immunotherapy drugs, some patients can now live for 10 years or more.

However not all tumors respond to immunotherapy, which has its own side effects.

“We are only at the beginning of immunotherapy,” said Bruno Quesnel, research director at France’s National Cancer Institute.

Pierre Saintigny, an oncologist at France’s Leon Berard cancer centre, said that different kinds of immunotherapy treatments will need to be combined “as intelligently as possible.”

“With immunotherapy, we have moved up a level in cancer treatment, but steps still need to be taken for all the patients who do not benefit from it,” he added.

CAR-T therapy involves taking the T-cells from the blood of an individual patient and modifying them in a laboratory.

Then the T-cells, which are part of the immune system, are injected back into the patient, newly trained to target cancerous cells.

Another technique called Allogeneic CAR-T involves getting the cells from a different, healthy person.

So far, CAR-T therapies have mainly been effective against some kinds of leukaemia, and the process remains very expensive.

Computer programs using artificial intelligence (AI) have been shown to identify brain and breast cancer from routine scans with more accuracy than humans.

With AI research booming across a range of fields, it is expected to play an increasing role in other ways to diagnose cancer.

“Thanks to artificial intelligence, we will be able to identify which patients can benefit from shorter treatment,” said Fabrice Andre, an oncologist France’s Gustave Roussy cancer institute.

This would mean fewer side effects for patients, and a lower burden on the health system.

Liquid biopsy testing

Liquid biopsies are able to detect cancer in DNA from a simple blood test, which is easier and less invasive than traditional biopsies which require a tissue sample.

Quicker and easier testing would help doctors detect and act against cancer before it has the chance to spread.

The new technique is now being used in the United States, “but there are still a lot of false positives,” Andre said.

There have long been vaccines available to protect against the human papillomavirus (HPV), which causes cervical cancer, and hepatitis B which can lead to liver cancer.



## Arctic Cold No Sweat For Electric Cars In Norway

JESSHEIM (Dispatches) - Norwegian electric car owners have a word for the way they feel when they look nervously at their battery indicators while driving in subfreezing weather: “Rekkevideangst”, or “range anxiety”.

Tesla owner Philip Benassi has experienced it on cold winter days, but like other Norwegians, he has learned to cope with it.

With temperatures often falling below zero, rugged terrain and long stretches of remote roads, Norway may not seem like the most ideal place to drive an electric car, whose battery dies faster in cold weather.

Yet the country is the undisputed world champion when it comes to the zero-emission vehicles.

A record four out of five new autos sold in Norway last year were electric, in a major oil-producing country that aims to end the sale of new fossil fuel cars by 2025 — a decade ahead of the European Union’s planned ban.

By comparison, electric cars accounted for 12.1 per cent of new car sales in the EU in 2022, up from 9.1 per cent a year earlier, according to data published Wednesday by the European Automobile Manufacturers’ Association.

Benassi took the plunge in 2018.

In his gleaming white Tesla S, the 38-year-old salesman for a cosmetics company clocks between 20,000 and 25,000 kilometers (12,400 and 15,500 miles) a year.

Like most new electric vehicle owners, he had moments of panic in the beginning when he saw the battery gauge drop quickly, with the prospect of it falling to zero on a deserted country road.

“I didn’t know the car well enough. But after all these years, I have a pretty good idea of how many kilowatts it needs and I know that it varies a lot depending on whether the car has spent the night outdoors or in a garage,” he told AFP.

The car uses much more battery when it is parked outside in temperatures that can reach minus 15 degrees Celsius (five degrees Fahrenheit), Benassi said.

“It takes quite a while for it to go back to normal consumption,” he added.

In the cold season, how much range electric cars lose depends on the model and how low the temperature gets.

“But the following rules of thumb apply: A frost of around minus 10C will reduce the operating range by around a third compared to summer weather, and a severe one (minus 20C or more) by up to half,” said Finnish consultant Vesa Linja-aho.

“By storing the car in a warm garage, this phenomenon can be mitigated somewhat,” he added.

Drivers must plan their routes before long journeys, but car applications and Norway’s vast network of more than 5,600 fast and superfast charging stations help make the process easier.

Electric cars accounted for 54 per cent of new car registrations last year in Finnmark, Norway’s northernmost region in the Arctic where the mercury has at times fallen to minus 51C — a sign that the cold issue is not insurmountable.

Other Nordic countries that regularly experience chilly temperatures also top world rankings for electric vehicles — they accounted for around 33 per cent of new car sales in Sweden and Iceland in 2022.

“Now more and more new electric cars have systems for pre-heating the batteries, which is very smart because you get more range and because if your car is heated before you charge, it will also charge faster,” said Christina Bu, head of the Norwegian Electric Vehicle Association.



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## Japan Needs Stable, Sustained Inflation

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japanese Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiji Kihara stressed the need to achieve an economy where inflation rises stably and sustainably, when asked whether the next central bank governor should maintain ultra-easy monetary policy. "What's important is to create economic conditions where prices rise stably and sustainably," Kihara told a television program. "As for the next BOJ governor, the prime minister will choose who he thinks is the most appropriate person," he said. "It's important for monetary, and the broader macro-economic policy, to be stable." Kihara also said the government was ready to "respond flexibly as needed," when asked whether additional steps could be taken to cushion the economic blow from rising fuel and raw material costs.



## Europe Bans Russian Diesel, Other Oil Products Over Ukraine

FRANKFURT (Dispatches) - Europe imposed a ban Sunday on Russian diesel fuel and other refined oil products, slashing energy dependency on Moscow and seeking to further crimp the Kremlin's fossil fuel earnings as punishment for invading Ukraine.

The ban comes along with a price cap agreed by the Group of Seven allied democracies. The goal is allowing Russian diesel to keep flowing to countries like China and India and avoiding a sudden price rise that would hurt consumers worldwide, while reducing the profits funding Moscow's budget and war.

Diesel is key for the economy because it is used to power cars, trucks carrying goods, farm equipment and factory machinery. Diesel prices have been elevated due to recovering demand after the COVID-19 pandemic and limits on refining capacity, contributing to inflation for other goods worldwide.

The new sanctions create uncertainty about prices as the 27-nation European Union finds new supplies of diesel from the U.S., Middle East and India to replace those from Russia, which at one point delivered 10% of Europe's total diesel needs. Those are longer journeys than from Russia's ports, stretching available tankers.

Prices also could be driven up by reviving demand from China as the economy rebounds after the end of draconian COVID-19 restrictions.

The price cap of \$100 per barrel for diesel, jet fuel and gasoline is to be enforced by barring insurance and shipping services from handling diesel priced over the limit. Most of those companies are located in Western countries.

It follows a \$60-per-barrel cap on Russian crude that took effect in December and is supposed to work the same way. Both the diesel and oil caps could be tightened later.

"Once we have these price caps set, we can squeeze the Russian price and deny them, deny (President Vladimir) Putin money for his war without a price spike that's going to hurt Western economies and developing economies," said Thomas O'Donnell, a global fellow with the Washington-based Wilson Center.

The diesel price cap will not bite immediately because it was set at about what Russian diesel trades for. Russia's chief problem now will be finding new customers, not evading the price ceiling. However, the cap aims to prevent Russian gains from any sudden price spikes in refined oil products.

Analysts say there might be a price bump initially as markets sort out the changes. But they say the embargo should not cause a price spike if the cap works as intended and Russian diesel keeps flowing to other countries.

Diesel fuel at the pump has been flat since the start of December, costing 1.80 euros per liter (\$7.37 per gallon) as of Jan. 30, according to the weekly oil market report issued by the European Union's executive commission. Pump prices in Germany, the EU's largest economy, fell 2.6 cents to 1.83 euros per liter (\$7.48 per gallon) as of Jan. 31.

The ban provides for a 55-day grace period for diesel loaded on tankers before Sunday, a step aimed at avoiding ruffling markets. European Union officials say importers have had time to adjust since the ban was announced in June.

## Russia's Oil, Gas Revenues Slump 46% Year-Over-Year

LONDON (OilPrice) - Russia's budget revenues from oil and gas plunged in January by 46% compared to the same month last year due to the sanctions on Russian oil exports, which led to a slump in the price of Russia's flagship crude grade.

Russian budget revenues from energy sales – including taxes and customs revenues – plummeted last month to the lowest level since August 2020, according to data from its finance ministry compiled by Reuters.

In January 2023, the price of Russia's flagship Urals grade averaged 42% lower than in the same month of 2022, as its discount to Brent Crude grew wider following the EU embargo and the G7 price cap, which came into effect on December 5. The average price of Urals in January, at \$49.48 per barrel, was 1.7 times lower than in January 2022, when it averaged \$85.64 per barrel, Russia's Finance Ministry said earlier this week.

Russia calculates the export duty due to the budget based on the price of Urals. This has been reducing its revenues due to the wide discount of Urals to Brent, which has swelled to nearly \$40 per barrel at times.

Brent Crude was trading at around \$82 a barrel early on Friday, while Urals, per Reuters estimates, was at around \$53.60 per barrel.

Russia is considering taxing its oil firms based on the price of Brent – instead of Urals – to limit the fallout on the Russian budget revenues due to the widening discount of Urals to Brent, Russian daily Kommersant reported on Friday, quoting sources.

## Indian Refiners Pay Traders in Dirhams for Russian Oil

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) - Indian refiners have begun paying for most of their Russian oil purchased via Dubai-based traders in United Arab Emirates dirhams instead of U.S. dollars, four sources with knowledge of the matter said.

While Western sanctions against Moscow are not recognized by India, and purchases of Russian oil may in any case not violate them, banks and financial institutions are cautious about clearing payments so as not to unwittingly fall foul of the many

measures imposed against Russia following its invasion of Ukraine.

Indian refiners and traders are concerned they may not be able to continue to settle trades in dollars, especially if the price of Russian crude rises above a cap imposed by the Group of Seven nations and Australia in December.

That has led traders to seek alternative methods of payment, which could also aid Russia's efforts to de-dollarise its economy in response to the Western sanctions.

Previous attempts by Indian refiners to pay traders for Russian crude in dirhams through Dubai banks failed, forcing them to switch back to the U.S. currency.

But India's top bank, the State Bank of India (SBI), is now clearing these dirham payments, the sources told Reuters, providing details of transactions that have not previously been reported.

The SBI, which has overseas branches including in the United States, did not respond to requests for comment.

The G7 price cap prohibits any Western company, such as the insurance and shipping service providers that underpin much of global trade, from involvement in trading Russian crude if the purchase price is above \$60 a barrel at the loading point in Russia. That remains the case even if the oil is bound for countries such as China and India which do not recognise the cap.

The shift to dirham payments was also triggered by the SBI asking refiners looking to make dollar payments for Russian crude to provide a breakdown of the costs of the oil, freight and insurance, allowing it to vet trade and avoid violating the cap.

"The SBI is very conservative in its approach," one of the sources said, even though India does not follow the price cap mechanism and Western insurance and shipping are not used for delivery.

Indian refiners typically buy Russian crude from traders at a price that includes delivery to India.

## China's Oil Demand Bounce May Push Producers to Reconsider Output

BENGALURU (Dispatches) - Oil producers may have to reconsider their output policies following a demand recovery in China, the world's second-largest oil consumer, the International Energy Agency's Executive Director Fatih Birol said.

Demand in China, the world's largest crude importer and No. 2 buyer of liquefied natural gas, has become the biggest uncertain factor in global oil and gas markets in 2023 as investors bet on the speed of its recovery after Beijing lifted COVID restrictions in December.

"We expect about half of the growth in global oil demand this year will come from China," Birol told Reuters on the sidelines of the India Energy Week conference.

He added that China's jet fuel demand is exploding, putting upward pressure on demand. "If demand goes up very strongly, if the Chinese economy rebounds, then there will be a need, in my view, for the OPEC+ countries to look at their (output) policies," Birol said.

Producer group OPEC+ angered the United States and other Western nations in October when it decided to cut output by 2 million barrels a day from November through 2023, instead of pumping more to cut fuel prices and help the global economy as the U.S. advised.

Birol said he hoped such a situation does not repeat, and that OPEC+ - which includes members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies such as Russia - will return to a constructive role in the market as demand improves.

OPEC+ rolled over the group's current output policy at a meeting on Wednesday, leaving production cuts agreed last year in place.

Separately, Birol said price caps on Russian oil have achieved the objectives of both stabilising oil markets and reducing Moscow's revenues from oil and gas exports. Russia's revenues likely fell by nearly 30% in January, or about \$8 billion, compared with a year before, he added.

G7 nations, the European Commission and Australia this week approved a \$100 per barrel price cap on diesel and a \$45 per barrel cap on discounted products such as fuel oil starting from Feb. 5.

This followed a similar measure they implemented on Dec. 5 barring Western-supplied maritime insurance, finance and brokering for seaborne Russian crude unless it was sold below a \$60 price cap.

Birol said fuel markets might face difficulties in the short term as global trade routes "reshuffle" to accommodate Europe drawing on more imports from China, India, the Middle East and the United States.

That could force other markets such as Latin America to scout for alternative imports, he said. Europe has decided to end refined fuel imports from Russia from Sunday.

Birol said however that the fuel market balance could improve from the second half as more refining capacity is added globally.

## Saudi Minister Warns Sanctions, Underinvestment May Cause Energy Shortages



DUBAI (Dispatches) - Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman warned that sanctions and underinvestment in the energy sector could result in a shortage of energy supplies.

The European Union has imposed a series of sanctions against Russia, reducing Russian energy exports, and other Western powers have also imposed measures as they seek to further limit Moscow's ability to fund its war in Ukraine.

In response to a question on how the sanctions environment would affect the energy market, bin Salman told an industry conference in Riyadh: "All of those so-called sanctions, embargoes, lack of investments, they will convolute into one thing and one thing only, a lack of energy supplies of all kinds when they are most needed".

The prince did not specifically mention Russia in his remarks. He said Saudi Arabia was working to send Ukraine liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), which is most commonly used as a cooking fuel and in heating.

Asked what lessons had been learnt from energy market dynamics in 2022, Prince Abdulaziz said the most important one was for the rest of the world to "trust OPEC+".

"We are a responsible group of countries, we do take policy issues relevant to energy and oil markets in a total silo and we don't engage ourselves in political issues," the prince said.

The minister said he remains cautious on any increase in production.

OPEC+, an alliance that includes members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and others including Russia, agreed last year to cut its production target by 2 million barrels per day, about 2% of world demand, from November until the end of 2023 to support the market.

An OPEC+ panel that met last Wednesday endorsed the decision, and the main message throughout the meeting was that the group would stay the course until the end of the agreement.

## IMF Raises Global Growth Forecasts for 2023

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has made a slight increase to its global growth outlook for 2023, due to "surprisingly resilient" demand in the United States and Europe, easing energy costs and the reopening of China's economy after Beijing abandoned its strict COVID-19 restrictions.

It still sees the pace of global growth falling this year compared with 2022, but by a smaller margin than it predicted in October. The IMF is now forecasting 2.9% growth for 2023 – up from a 2.7% forecast in October – versus 3.4% growth last year.

The figures are in its latest World Economic Outlook, which warns that the world could easily fall into recession this year. "Central banks are likely to continue to tighten monetary policy to fight inflation, and concerns that this restrictive stance could tip the economy into a recession have increased in major advanced economies," the report says.

The IMF now expects US GDP growth of 1.4% this year, up from a 1.0% prediction in October and following 2.0% growth in 2022. This is down to stronger-than-expected consumption and investment in the third quarter of 2022, a robust labour market and strong consumer balance sheets.

The Eurozone outlook is also up – to 0.7%, versus 0.5% in October, although this is down from 3.5% growth in 2022. The IMF says Europe has adapted to higher energy costs more quickly than expected.

The IMF has raised its forecast for global growth this year.

The IMF has revised China's growth outlook sharply higher, to 5.2% from a 4.4% forecast in October. Zero-COVID policies in 2022 slashed China's growth rate to 3.0%, putting it below the global average for the first time in more than 40 years.

India's outlook remains robust, with unchanged forecasts for a dip in 2023 growth to 6.1% but a rebound to 6.8% in 2024, matching its 2022 performance.

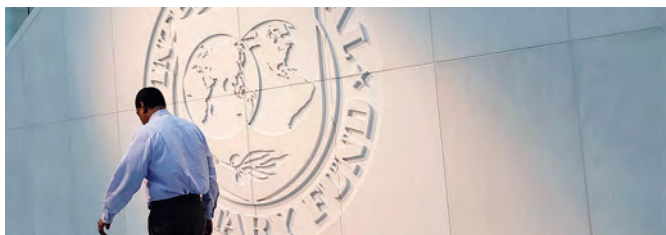
Britain is the only major economy the IMF expects to shrink this year. It forecasts a 0.6% fall in GDP as households struggle with rising living costs, including for energy and mortgages.

For 2024, the IMF has cut its global growth forecast very slightly to 3.1%, from 3.2% in October.

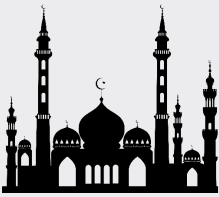
The US central bank has slowed the pace of its interest rate rises but says there will be "ongoing increases" as it continues to battle

inflation. The Federal Reserve has increased its benchmark overnight interest rate by a quarter of a percentage point, taking it to a range of 4.50-4.75%. This follows six larger rises in a row, including three consecutive jumps of three-quarters of a percentage point.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell says that while inflation has begun to slow, he expects a couple more rate hikes in the months ahead and does not see the Fed cutting rates this year.







PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)

■ Evening (Maghreb)

■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)

■ Tomorrow's Sunrise

12:18

17:57

05:31

06:57

22. He it is Who enableth you to traverse through land and sea; so that ye even board ships;- they sail with them with a favourable wind, and they rejoice thereat; then comes a stormy wind and the waves come to them from all sides, and they think they are being overwhelmed: they cry unto Allah, sincerely offering (their) duty unto Him saying, "If thou dost deliver us from this, we shall truly show our gratitude!"

Surah 10. Jonah ( 22 )

# China Has Reasons to Keep Cool After U.S. Downs Suspected Spy Balloon

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China may respond to the U.S. shooting down its suspected spy balloon after warning of “serious repercussions”, but analysts say any move will likely be finely calibrated to keep from worsening ties that both sides have been seeking to repair.

Regional analysts and diplomats are closely watching China’s response after a U.S. fighter jet shot down the balloon - which Beijing says was an errant weather-monitoring craft - in the Atlantic off South Carolina.

China on Sunday condemned the attack as an “over-reaction”, saying it reserved the right to use the necessary means to deal with “similar situations”, without elaborating.

Some analysts said they will be scrutinising the seas and skies of East Asia for signs of tension, given growing deployments of ships and aircraft from China and from the United States and its allies.

But while bilateral tension has risen in the past few days over the balloon incident, Beijing and Washington have been seeking to improve ties.

The discovery of the balloon in the upper atmosphere above North America prompted the United States to postpone a visit to Beijing this week by Secretary of State Antony Blinken. That trip had resulted from a November summit between Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping.

Both sides are widely seen as keen to stabilise relations after a turbulent few years, with the Biden administration leery of tensions descending into conflict and Xi eyeing a recovery for the world’s second-largest economy after a severe COVID-19 slump.

The path of rebuilding U.S.-China relations likely remains on track, said Zhao Tong, a senior fellow at the China office of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a visiting researcher at Princeton University.

“The two sides still have a shared strong interest in stabilising and responsibly managing the bilateral relationship,” Zhao told Reuters.

Collin Koh, a security fellow at Singapore’s S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, predicted China would continue to respond vigorously to U.S. military reconnaissance patrols but stop short of confrontation.

Even in calmer moments, Chinese forces actively shadow U.S. military patrols, particularly at sea, amid tensions over Taiwan and the disputed South China Sea, say regional military attaches.

“Against manned platforms we might expect China to exercise restraint, but against unmanned ones it becomes more uncertain - especially if Beijing believes that it’s possible to contain fallout since it involves no crew,” Koh said.

He noted China’s seizure of a U.S. underwater glider deployed by an oceanographic research ship off the Philippines in December 2016. The Chinese navy later returned it to a U.S. warship.

Christopher Twomey, a security scholar at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in California, said any Chinese response would be limited.

“I’d expect they’d protest moderately but hope to sweep this under the rug and reinstate progress on senior-level visits within months,” Twomey said, speaking in a private capacity.

Zhu Feng, executive dean of the School of International Studies at Nanjing University, said U.S. officials should stop “hying” events to ensure a smooth return to the normalised communications they earlier requested from Beijing.

Zhu expressed hope “the two governments can turn the page as soon as possible so that Sino-U.S. relations can return to an institutionalised channel of communication and dialogue”.

Some analysts are watching Chinese state media and online activity for hints at any clamour for a tougher response, as China’s mainstream state media have stuck to reporting official statements.

On China’s heavily censored social media, there was little evidence that nationalistic anger was being stirred up over the incident, with many netizens asking what the fuss was over one balloon.

## Iraq Commits to... FROM PAGE 1

Iranian firms have been a major supplier of technical and engineering services and equipment to Iraq in recent years amid efforts in the Arab country to recover from years of invasion and militancy.

However, Iranian contractors working for Iraqi government agencies and state entities have had problems receiving payments for their projects mainly because of US sanctions on Iran.

Safari, who also met Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid in Baghdad on Monday, said that Iran and Iraq had agreed to further boost their trade and economic ties.

He said the two countries would resume holding meetings under a key intergovernmental economic committee format years after the initiative was suspended.

He said a first meeting of the intergovernmental committee is expected to be convened within the next few weeks.

Meanwhile Safari stated that the joint commission for economic cooperation between Iran and Iraq will be held soon.

Safari told reporters in Baghdad that a very important issue during his visit to Baghdad was agreed upon which was holding a joint economic commission between the two countries.

He expressed hope that in the next few days, the Joint Commission on Cooperation between Iran and Iraq will be held.

By holding the commission, the trade between the two countries will be facilitated and a new chapter will be opened in Baghdad-Tehran cooperation.

The top diplomat also discussed the possibility of the establishment of joint industrial towns with the Iraqis to export their productions to the neighboring countries.

## Iran Says Not Working... FROM PAGE 1

“The two countries are aiming to build a faster drone that could pose new challenges for Ukrainian air defenses,” the WSJ said, citing officials.

Tehran has multiple times rejected in the strongest terms the Western claims of Iran’s delivery of weapons and drones to Russia to be used against Ukraine, saying the country has been engaged in defense cooperation with Moscow for long and pursues a resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

In a statement last week, the Iranian Defense Ministry announced that one of its workshop complexes in the central city of Isfahan had come under attack from a number of Micro Aerial Vehicles (MAVs), but the complex’s air defenses successfully repelled the attack.

The ministry underscored that the unsuccessful attack did not cause any loss of life and only led to minor damage to the roof of a workshop. The complex, it added, continues its ordinary operations following the attack.

Reacting to the report, Mykhailo Podolyak, adviser to Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky, took to Twitter to express his joy. He said “Ukraine did warn you.”

## Iran Shows Interest... FROM PAGE 1

According to the deputy minister, Iranian companies have already assessed the quality of Belarusian timber products - they are competitive with respect to other exporting countries. During the visit, the parties were able to finally resolve the issue of payments for supplies: they will be made in Russian rubles and through the Russian payment system. “No matter how difficult it is, we are looking for and finding alternative markets. I am sure that as this work develops, we will be able to forget about the European sanctions,” Vladimir Krech said.

## Iran Today Needs National Unity More Than Ever

TEHRAN (MNA) – “Today, we need national unity more than ever, and this unity is a principle that must always be adhered to,” President Ebrahim Raisi said.

Raisi made the comments on Monday night at the meeting of Followers of Monotheistic (Abrahamic) Religions in Tehran.

He congratulated the arrival of the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

“The auspicious days of the victory of the glorious Islamic Revolution remind all of us of the bravery, courage, standing and resistance of the Iranian nation and the many victories that this great nation has gained so far,” the president said.

“These victories are without a doubt due to the insight, resilience and resistance of the great nation of Iran which consists of different dialects, religions, and beliefs. Undoubtedly, all these victories and achievements belong to the entire Iranian nation,” Raisi added.

He also said that “In the political school of Imam Khomeini, politics is tied to spirituality, and politics without spirituality and God have resulted in big calamities to humanity.”

“70 years of oppression of the Palestinian people is the result of God-less politics,” the president continued.

He went on to point out that the enemies are trying to frustrate the Iranian nation and seek to divide it as they never like to see its unity and progress.

According to Raisi, all Abrahamic religions have attached great importance to the concept of family, stressing that all the wars and animosity waged by the enemies sought to prevent the formation of a unified society in Iran.

## Iran Fully Ready to Help Quake-Hit Turkey

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian says Iran is “fully ready” to help those affected by the devastating earthquake in neighboring Turkey, which has so far claimed the lives of thousands of people there.

In a telephone conversation with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu on Monday night, Amirabdollahian said Tehran stands ready to provide necessary aid to Turkey, where search and rescue operations are underway to release those trapped in the rubble.

“The news of the tragic earthquake in Turkey’s south deeply saddened me and the Iranian nation and government. We offer our condolences to you, the government, and the dear people of the Republic of Turkey, especially the bereaved families. In this difficult situation, we stand by the Turkish nation and government,” he said.

“Based on the president’s orders, the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) is ready to fully cooperate with you and provide the necessary assistance. In this regard, an IRCS medical and relief team will arrive in Turkey tonight to help rescue the victims.”

A powerful 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit southern Turkey and northern Syria early Monday.

With thousands of buildings collapsed, the tremor is considered to be the strongest to hit the region in nearly a century.

So far, more than 4,800 people have been confirmed dead in both Turkey and Syria.

The top Iranian diplomat also voiced concerns about the situation of Iranians, including the students, residing in the quake-affected areas, and expressed gratitude to Ankara for helping them.

He wished a swift recovery for the injured, patience for the bereaved families, and pride and well-being for the Turkish nation. Cavusoglu, for his part, thanked the Iranian president, foreign minister, government and nation for their support and sympathy.

He expressed his gratitude to Iran for voicing readiness to send IRCS medical and relief teams to Turkey.

The Turkish foreign minister also highlighted Ankara’s attention to the situation of Iranian nationals and its cooperation with the Iranian embassy in Ankara and the Iranian consulate in Erzurum to assist them.

## Turkmenistan, Iran Ink MoU on Transit Issues

MASHHAD (IRNA) - Turkmenistan and Iran have signed a memorandum of understanding to help resolve transit issues as well as differences among merchants.

Abbas Arbab Kholes, Iran’s Ambassador to Turkmenistan, said that the MoU was signed in a border and consular commission meeting between the two countries in the capital city of Ashgabat on Monday.

The meeting was held between Consular Deputy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Parliament and Iranians Affairs Ali-Reza Bigdeli and his Turkmen counterpart at Turkmenistan’s Foreign Ministry in Ashgabat, Arbab Kholes noted.

The two sides raised issues such as the development of customs, transport, road, railway, and maritime cooperation as well as providing drivers with more facilities and facilitating the issuance of visas, and improving border circumstances, he added. The ambassador also pointed to the meeting between Iran’s deputy foreign minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Raşit Meredow.

According to the envoy, the Turkmen FM felicitated the victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, wished for increasing success of the Iranian people and government, called for expansion of bilateral ties in diplomacy, tourism, economy, and Persian Language cooperation, and underlined the need for the exchange of diplomatic delegations between the two sides.

Arbab Kholes, for his part, said that the Iranian diplomatic delegation held talks with the road transportation union of Turkmenistan and they reached a good consensus.

Turkmenistan with around seven million population has joint borderlines with Iran, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Iran’s Razavi Khorasan Province possesses 531 kilometers of borderlines with Turkmenistan. The Iranian province conducts diplomatic and trade exchanges via three border crossings of Sarakhs, Lotfabad, and Bajgiran.

## Syria Receives 1st Batch of Iran Humanitarian Aid

TEHRAN (MNA) - Syria has received the first consignment of Iran’s humanitarian assistance in the wake of the deadly earthquake.

The first airplane carrying humanitarian aid from the Islamic Republic of Iran has arrived in Syria for the quake-ravaged regions, the head of the Syrian Civil Aviation Authority said.

Basem Mansour added that the relief aid consists of 45 tons of pharmaceutical, food, and health assistance.

He further noted that five airplanes carrying humanitarian aid from Iran, Russia, and the UAE are slated to land at Damascus and Latakia airports tomorrow.

Earlier on Monday, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made a phone call to his Syrian counterpart to sympathize with Syrians over the devastating earthquake and offer to provide humanitarian aid to the victims.

More than 4,300 people have been killed and thousands injured after a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck Turkey and Syria early Monday.

## Notre-Dame to Regain Spire This Year and Reopen End-2024

PARIS (Dispatches) - Notre-Dame Cathedral’s spire will be back in place by the end of the year, but a full reopening following the devastating fire of 2019 will not happen before next year’s Paris Olympic Games.

The reconstruction is still on track for completion by the end of 2024, the culture ministry told AFP.

“The site is progressing at a good pace,” a spokesperson said.

The authorities have previously given December 8 — the Feast of the Immaculate Conception — as a likely deadline. It means the 12th century cathedral, which previously saw some 12 million annual visitors, will not be able to welcome attendees of the Olympic Games which Paris is hosting in July and August 2024.

But the sharp spire, added by architect Eugene Viollet-Le-Duc during the cathedral’s redesign in the 19th century and replacing a previous wooden spire that had fallen into disrepair, will be back in place by the end of 2023, the ministry said.

The collapse of the wooden spire was one of the most dramatic moments of the fire of April 15, 2019.

An identical version has been made from the same original materials: 500 tonnes of oak wood for the structure and 250 tonnes of lead for the cover and ornaments.

There have been health concerns over the lead debris from the fire, and the use of lead in the reconstruction, with French officials having to reassure their European counterparts that adequate safety measures have been taken.

Preparatory work to start reinstalling the spire began this week, with scaffolding put in place and custom-cut base stones delivered along the River Seine.

Once completed the spire will reach 100 metres high.



## Joshua Sets Date For Franklin Bout

LONDON (diondon (AFP) – Former world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua will face American Jermaine Franklin at London's O2 Arena on April 1.

Joshua is returning to the ring after two successive defeats to Oleksandr Usyk, with the British fighter's most recent loss against the Ukrainian coming last August in Saudi Arabia.

The 33-year-old takes on Franklin in search of his first victory since beating Kubrat Pulev in 2020.

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## Leeds United Sack Manager Marsch

LONDON (Dispatches) - Leeds United have sacked their American manager Jesse Marsch with the team languishing 17th in the table, one place above the relegation zone, the Premier League club said.

Marsch joined Leeds in February 2022, replacing Argentine manager Marcelo Bielsa and secured the club's top-flight survival on the final day of last season.

"We would like to thank Jesse and his backroom staff for their efforts and wish them well for the future," Leeds said in a statement.

# James Poised for Scoring Record Crown

LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - One of the oldest records in American sport is set to fall this week when LeBron James finally eclipses Los Angeles Lakers legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the most prolific scorer in NBA history.

For the best part of four decades, Abdul-Jabbar has owned the NBA's all-time scoring record of 38,387 points, mark that many thought might never be beaten.

Yet after a dazzling 20-year career, the 38-year-old James stands just 36 points away from finally passing Abdul-Jabbar.

Given he has averaged 30 points per game this season, the only question is where and when Abdul-Jabbar's record will fall.

The Lakers host Oklahoma City today and the Milwaukee Bucks on Thursday before hitting the road to take on the NBA champion Golden State Warriors.

The most likely scenario is that James will claim the record at some point in the Lakers two midweek home games.

James has spent much of the season insisting that he has not been obsessing over the record, emphasizing that his priority remains helping the Lakers turn around a campaign which is threatening to end outside of playoff contention for a second year running.

Lakers coach Darvin Ham reflected that mood while acknowledging that breaking the record would be "an amazing feat."

"When it happens, kudos to Bron for all his longevity and not just longevity, but longevity at the top of the list at an elite level," Ham said on Thursday.

"But our day-to-day, we hardly ever discuss it unless we're asked about it. For us, it's just, how can we get our team in the best position to make a run?"

Four-time NBA champion James has however been slightly more expansive in recent days as the record hoves into view.



"I think it's up there with the home run record in baseball. It's one of those records that you just don't ever see or think that would be broken."

Indeed, the NBA's scoring record has changed hands just once since 1966, when Abdul-Jabbar overtook another Lakers icon, Wilt Chamberlain, on April 5, 1984.

"I think most of us back then thought that record would never be broken," Golden State coach Steve Kerr said of Abdul-Jabbar's record.

"So to see LeBron do it over 20 years is pretty remarkable and a testament to not only his ability but his durability."

"He's just a machine. He's healthy and a physical force night after night."

One area of intrigue surrounding James' record chase has been his relationship with Abdul-Jabbar himself.

The two basketball icons have had an icy relationship, which traces back to Abdul-Jabbar's public criticism of James.

Abdul-Jabbar has taken aim at James for issues ranging from the Covid-19 vaccine to his on-court conduct.



DOHA (Dispatches) - Qatar have appointed Portuguese Carlos Queiroz as manager until the end of the 2026 World Cup, the country's football association (QFA) said.

The 69-year-old managed Iran at last year's finals in Qatar but left after the team's group stage elimination.

Queiroz replaces Spaniard Felix Sanchez, who led Qatar through their ill-fated World Cup campaign, in which the hosts lost all three of their group matches and only scored once.

"Today, Monday, the Qatar Football Association officially decided to appoint Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz as coach of our first national team until 2026," the QFA said.

"Queiroz has a rich biography, great knowledge and extensive experience in Asian football."

The 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada would be ex-Real Madrid manager Queiroz's fifth appearance at the finals, having led his native Portugal in 2010 before taking Iran to the tournaments in Brazil, Russia and Qatar.

## Eagles and Chiefs Vow to Avoid Super Bowl Circus

MIAMI (Dispatches) - It is the biggest week in the American sports calendar culminating in the biggest game of the year, but for those getting ready for battle in Sunday's Super Bowl, the first test is keeping their eyes on the prize.

The Philadelphia Eagles and the Kansas City Chiefs started Super Bowl week at their team hotels in Arizona on Monday repeating the same message - avoid the distractions.

And there is plenty to avoid.

It starts with 'Opening Night' when the players from both teams are presented to the media in a televised three-hour marathon of interviews.

Then all through the week, there are corporate events, more press conferences, more television interviews and a whole host of parties thrown by various sponsors with celebrity guest lists.

"I pretty much think it's going to be a circus, to be honest with you," said Eagles wide receiver A.J. Brown.

"So much going on, you've just got to lock in and keep the main thing, the main thing. We're going out there to get ready for a football game. I've told my marketing people, who ask me to do this, to do that, I'm like, 'No. I'm there to play football,'" he added.

With the country's media descending on Phoenix, coaches are keen for their players to make sure they avoid any negative storylines, as well as steer clear of any incidents at all the events.

In between all the other commitments, the teams still have to practice, train, watch film of their opponents and fine tune their game plan.

Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes has been to two Super Bowls, winning at the end of the 2019 season. He knows the build-up is unique but has to be kept secondary.

"The Super Bowl week is special - it's a special week - but it's not about being down there the week of the Super Bowl, it's about winning the game," he said.

"I want guys to keep that at the front of mind. Enjoy it - enjoy the whole, entire week - but make sure you're prepared to go out there and play your best football as well," he said.



him out of action for the remainder of the year.

He was a second round loser at the Australian Open after which he revealed that he had

# Zverev Slips Two Places in ATP Rankings

PARIS (Dispatches) - Alexander Zverev slipped two places to 16th in the new ATP rankings released today while Novak Djokovic edged closer to Steffi Graf's all-time record for most weeks at number one.

The 25-year-old Zverev was ranked second at the end of August but is still on the comeback trail after tearing ankle ligaments during last year's French Open which kept

him out of action for the remainder of the year.

He was a second round loser at the Australian Open after which he revealed that he had

had type 1 diabetes since he was three.

Last week, Zverev was told he would face no disciplinary action from the ATP after an independent investigation found "insufficient evidence" to substantiate allegations of domestic abuse.

He beat Stan Wawrinka in the Davis Cup on Friday but could not prevent his Germany team losing to Switzerland.

Frances Tiafoe and Pablo Carreno Busta both move up a place to 14th and 15th respectively.

Djokovic, who sat out Serbia's Davis Cup win over Norway, will spend his 375th week at the top of the pile.

Graf holds the record with 377 weeks as world number one in the women's game.

## Man City Charged by Premier League Over Alleged Financial Rule Breaches

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City have been referred to an independent commission over more than 100 alleged breaches of Premier League finance rules, England's top-flight football league said.

The breaches stretch from the 2009-10 season to the 2017-18 campaign, the league added.

City were acquired by their Abu Dhabi-based owners, City Football Group, in 2008.

If the charges are proved City, could face a range of sanctions, including a point deduction or expulsion from the Premier League.

The club are alleged to have breached rules relating to the provision of accurate financial information, "in particular with respect to its revenue (including sponsorship revenue), its related parties and its operating costs," the league said.

The charges stem from a Premier League investigation into City's financial dealings launched four years ago, months after the release of a tranche of "Football Leaks" documents obtained by the German publication Der Spiegel and reviewed by Reuters.

City were subsequently banned from the Champions League by European governing body UEFA for two years, but successfully appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), which overturned the ban in 2020.

The club were fined €30 million by UEFA, which CAS reduced to €10 million.

City are alleged by the Premier League to have not fully disclosed managerial remuneration in each of the seasons from 2009-10 to 2012-13, when Roberto Mancini was manager.

The club are also charged with failing to comply with Premier League's rules requiring clubs to follow UEFA's financial fair play (FFP) regulations from the 2013-14 to 2017-18 seasons and failing to follow the Premier League's rules on profit and sustainability from the 2015-16 to 2017-18 seasons.

The FFP regulations are designed to stop clubs running up big losses through spending on players. They also ensure sponsorship deals are based on their real market value and are genuine commercial agreements — and not ways for owners to pump cash into a club to get around the rules.



## Kane Eyes Premier League History After Breaking Spurs Goal Record

LONDON (Dispatches) - Harry Kane has set his sights on breaking the Premier League's all-time goals record after becoming the leading scorer in Tottenham's history.

Kane's first-half strike in Sunday's 1-0 win against defending champions Manchester City took him past Jimmy Greaves to a record 267 goals for the north London club.

The 29-year-old's predatory finish also made him only the third player to reach 200 goals in the Premier League, behind record holder Alan Shearer (260) and Wayne Rooney (208).

Now his place in Tottenham history is secured, Kane admitted he would love to break Shearer's record as well.

"I'm sure you guys will be talking about that," he said. "It's always there in the back of my mind but I just take it game-by-game, season-by-season."

"It's definitely there to be broken and I'm feeling good and feeling fit so we'll see what happens."

Kane's remarkable goal feats are all the more incredible given he was regarded as unlikely to make it at the highest level at the start of his career.

After graduating from Tottenham's youth academy, Kane was sent on a series of loan spells in the lower leagues before finally being given his chance to shine in the Premier League.

"It's been an amazing journey," he said. "I've been here since I was 11 years old, it's 18 years of my life, a lot of hard work and dedication."

"I'm extremely proud to represent this club and score 267 goals for them and 200 Premier League goals for them is something I'll never take for granted."

"I've just got to keep it going, score as many as I can and see what happens from there."

Kane could make further history later this season as he looks to become England's record scorer.

The England captain moved into joint first place with Rooney when he netted his 53rd international goal in the World Cup quarter-final defeat against France in December.

He could have broken the record in the same game but blazed a late penalty over the bar.

